

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current
scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Tuesday, January 24, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FROZEN FOOD QUESTIONS." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations and the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

All those questions you've been asking about frozen foods--or at least most of your questions are to have an answer today. From your letters I gather that this is the time of year when frozen foods come in especially handy. The markets aren't offering so much variety in fresh fruits and vegetables as at other seasons. And what fresh things they have often are expensive. So you may find more variety and better quality, and even more reasonable prices among frozen than among fresh foods right now. That's why some housewives are bringing home their fruits and vegetables in frozen packages from the grocery store, and others are using the garden products they packed in freezer lockers last summer.

Of course, frozen foods aren't yet common on most dinner tables. A good many people haven't even tried them yet. And a good many others consider them luxuries--company fare rather than for everyday meals. But all the indications are that the time is coming--the time is coming in the not-far-distant future when we'll be taking frozen foods as a matter of course just as we do ice cream today. Already housekeepers are asking a lot of questions about the best way to cook frozen vegetables and meat.

Now for example, here's a frequent query: "Should I cook frozen peas more or less than fresh peas?"

Less--always. Frozen peas cook tender in a shorter time than fresh peas. So do all other frozen vegetables. Mr. Wiegand of the Oregon Experiment Station, who has been working on frozen fruits and vegetables for several years, says that most people who cook frozen vegetables for the first time make the mistake of cooking them too long. Usually they are ready to serve in about half or at least three-fourths of the time fresh vegetables take to cook. Then, too, frozen vegetables have already been slightly cooked by the scalding in hot water or steam which they must always have before freezing. You may want to know why. The scalding stops the enzymes in the vegetables from continuing the ripening process which they would otherwise do even after the vegetables are frozen. Even at zero temperature they would go on ripening and eventually spoiling the vegetable unless they were stopped by heat. Incidentally scalding also brings out the bright color of the vegetable and makes it softer and easier to pack.

Second question: "Should I let frozen vegetables defrost or thaw before I cook them?"

1/24/39

Answer: No, not if they are dry packed. Thawing destroys the vitamin C in the vegetable. So empty your frozen vegetables directly from the package into a small quantity of rapidly boiling salted water. You may need a fork to break the frozen vegetables apart to allow the heat to get at them quickly and evenly.

Now about vegetables frozen in salt and water. Thaw brine-frozen vegetables only enough to loosen them from their containers. You can use cool or lukewarm running water to loosen them. Then slip the vegetables into boiling water. Let them cook right in the brine in which they are packed. Use only enough extra water to prevent scorching and finish the cooking. Mr. Wiegand of Oregon suggests that you can put the brine-frozen vegetable in a pan on the stove, let it thaw over the heat and then boil it--all in one process.

Another letter asks: "Is boiling the only way to cook frozen vegetables?"

Answer: No, but it is a very good way and probably the easiest way. At the Washington State Experiment Station recently they tried cooking peas by steaming, by boiling, and by cooking in a waterless cooker. They reported best results from steaming and next best results from boiling.

Here's a question many housekeepers ask: "How long can I keep a package of frozen vegetables safely in my refrigerator?"

The answer to that is much the same as if you asked how long you could keep a package of ice-cream in your refrigerator. It depends on how cold your refrigerator is and whether you put the frozen food on the shelf or in one of the freezing units. You keep ice cream for a few hours, overnight perhaps, or as long as it doesn't melt. That same rule holds good with frozen vegetables. You may keep them overnight, or 24 hours in a good refrigerator that registers 40 degrees. Or you may keep them several days if you put them in the part of the refrigerator where you freeze ice cubes. But you can't keep them very long, even in your freezing unit, without slow spoilage setting in. For long storage they must have a temperature of zero degrees and that's colder than any ordinary home refrigerator.

Last question: "Does freezing affect the taste of meat?"

No, according to Alice Child who made tests at the Minnesota Station. She cooked frozen pork loin, rib and rump cuts, porterhouse steak, chuck steak, lamb and pork chops. She found no difference in the flavor of the meat that had been frozen and the meat that had not.

Another listener asks if meat must be thawed before cooking or if you can put it over the fire while it is still frozen.

Answer: Whichever is most convenient. But meat which is still frozen when it goes into the pan needs more time to cook and needs a lower temperature at the start of cooking to allow it to thaw out. Otherwise it may burn on the surface while the inside is still raw and frozen. Unless you allow time for a roast to thaw before cooking, you may have one that looks attractive and ready for the table but is raw and icy in the center. At the Minnesota Station Miss Child found that a frozen 4-pound rolled rib beef roast or pork loin roast needed 20 minutes more per pound than an unfrozen roast. Frozen porterhouse steak required 15 minutes longer to broil than an unfrozen steak. And frozen lamb chops required 5 minutes longer than unfrozen.

#####

